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ABSTRACT

Current debates regarding teaching children to read are centered around the most effective way to establish a foundation for literacy in the early years. This document is comprised of a set of three position papers on how the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation teaches young children to read in its infant-toddler, preschool, and early elementary school programs. Papers for each developmental level describe how children acquire closely related and complementary literacy skills. The papers also list the strategies High/Scope-trained teachers and caregivers use to support reading and writing development in their programs and at home, cite scientific research proving that the High/Scope approach is effective, and answer questions frequently asked by educators, families, and policymakers. The introductory summary presents the literacy development principles and strategies common to all three papers and describes the research findings supporting the view that children do learn to read and write in High/Scope programs. Common strategies include creating a print-rich environment, making reading a team effort and part of the daily routine, exploring sounds and language, providing an array of writing materials and reasons to write, introducing early the idea of letters and words as written symbols, and planning for and supporting children's learning by assessing their literacy development. Each position paper contains references. (KB)

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How Young Children Learn to Read in High/Scope Programs

A series of position papers:

How Young Children Learn to Read in High/Scope Programs—A Summary

Good Beginnings in Reading for Infants and Toddlers in High/Scope Programs

How Preschoolers Learn to Read in High/Scope Programs

How High/Scope Teaches Reading in Kindergarten Through Third Grade

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How Young Children Learn to Read in High/Scope Programs—A Summary

This set of position papers explains how young children learn to read and write in High/Scope's infant-toddler, preschool, and early elementary programs. Papers for each developmental level (a) describe how children at that level acquire these closely related and complementary literacy skills; (b) list the strategies High/Scope-trained teachers and caregivers use, in partnership with parents, to support reading and writing development in their programs and at home; (c) cite scientific research proving that the High/Scope approach works; and (d) answer questions frequently asked by educators, families, and policymakers. This summary presents the literacy development principles and strategies common to all three papers and describes the research findings that allow us to state unequivocally: *Children learn to read and write in High/Scope programs.*

Why High/Scope values children's development of reading and writing skills

High/Scope recognizes that learning to read and write are two of the most essential educational achievements. In High/Scope programs, reading and writing are viewed as *interdependent abilities;* children learn to read as they write and learn to write as they read. These twin components of literacy—reading and writing—are the gateway to learning and productivity in today's information age. They open the door to academic advancement and job success and provide a pathway to lifelong learning, exploration, personal expression, and pleasure. While High/Scope is not unique in its attention to these literacy skills, it *is* unique in the *comprehensiveness* of its approach to literacy. Experiences that prepare children for reading and writing are included in every part of the High/Scope daily routine, and literacy-related materials are included in every area of the classroom, center, or home setting.

How young children learn to read and write: Underlying principles

Learning to read and write begins at birth and builds on children's basic need to communicate. Reading and writing take place within a broader context of language development. In an active learning environment, children *want* to use language—indeed they eagerly choose to read, write, and converse with others—because they have meaningful things to communicate about and caring people to communicate with. Teachers and caregivers, in partnership with parents at home, promote this process by supporting and extending children's emerging interests and by providing varied and stimulating materials and experiences.

Children learn to read and write at different rates and in different ways. High/Scope teachers and caregivers use a variety of educational strategies so children at all developmental levels and with a variety of learning styles can be successful in learning to read and write.

Children acquire literacy through key experiences in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Teachers and caregivers use these High/Scope key experiences, along with relevant state and local standards, as guidelines for structuring the learning environment, choosing educational materials, planning challenging activities, and supporting children's literacy

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development with age-appropriate and individualized instructional methods. Since teachers and parents are equal partners in High/Scope's educational approach, parents learn to recognize, support, and extend the key experiences in interactions with their children at home.

Reading and writing are best learned in contexts in which literacy skills are tied to meaning and comprehension. For infants and toddlers, this context might be reading and talking about stories while snuggling with a trusted caregiver or parent. For preschoolers, meaningful context may be representing a plan or personal experience through hand-drawn symbols and written words. For early elementary students, the context may be reading a book to gather background information and then writing a report related to a science or history project.

Children learn to read and write because they enjoy it and want to emulate adults. For young children, reading and writing should be generally pleasurable, not tedious. Over-attention to teaching correct form and the mechanics of spelling, grammar, and punctuation can discourage children's early attempts to read and write. When young children are first encouraged to communicate by using their emerging literacy skills and are appropriately supported and guided by adults, they will learn to master conventional standards of literacy.

How High/Scope-trained teachers and caregivers support reading and writing in young children

At all levels, High/Scope teachers and caregivers receive systematic training to learn specific strategies for promoting literacy in partnership with parents. Teachers and caregivers share control of the learning process with children by embracing the following intentional methods of teaching as they promote literacy experiences in the classroom, center, and home.

Create a print-rich environment. Every High/Scope center or classroom has a book or reading area with a wide variety of age-appropriate books and other reading materials. Parents are encouraged to provide lots of reading materials at home as well. All the learning areas and materials in the room are labeled with symbols and words. Additional printed materials are found throughout the room and outdoor play areas (e.g., posters, maps, measuring cups, messages, tool catalogs, group stories, instructions, seed packets, story tapes, and so on).

Make reading a team effort and part of the daily routine. Teachers and caregivers read with children every day and encourage parents and other family members to do the same. Adults read to the youngest children individually and in small intimate groups. For older children, adults establish daily story times during which they read to children and listen as children read to them or to one another.

Explore sounds and language. Children learn the sounds of letters and words by having fun with oral language both at school and at home. They build phonemic awareness through singing and chanting and moving to the beat, hearing and telling stories, rhyming, matching words with the same sounds, and inventing and acting out stories. As children's skills develop they add phonetic knowledge to these activities by connecting speech sounds to the letters and words in print.

Provide an array of writing materials and reasons to write. Writing materials, chosen for different developmental levels, include crayons, markers, brushes, chalk, pencils, pens, all types of paper, and computers (at the preschool and early elementary levels). As children make choices and pursue their interests, they have many reasons to write—to explore writing tools, make a birthday card, or keep a journal. In the elementary grades, writing is often a required part of children's projects in science, social studies, and other subject areas. Younger children acquire handwriting skills by starting with scribbles and letter-like forms and progressing to conventional forms. Teachers, care-

givers, and parents recognize and accept all forms of children's writing.

Introduce the idea of letters and words as written symbols early. Toddlers and preschoolers each have a personal written symbol they learn to associate with their name. Preschoolers begin exploring written symbols by writing the letters of their names and then move on to familiar words they see around the room. Early elementary students write by using a growing vocabulary of words they encounter in reading and project activities.

Plan for and support children's learning by assessing their literacy development. Teachers observe children daily to plan experiences that will strengthen and extend their reading and writing skills. They take anecdotal notes, compile portfolios, and use the High/Scope Child Observation Record and other appropriate measures to document what children are able to do and provide experiences that encourage them to advance to the next level. They also convey this information to parents so they can better understand their child's progress.

What research says about children's reading and writing success in High/Scope programs

Four decades of research proves that children in High/Scope programs acquire and sustain better reading and writing skills than children without comparable active learning experiences. Data show that for infants and toddlers, supportive adult-child communication helped to develop children's prereading skills and facilitated their language and cognitive development. For children who attended High/Scope preschool programs, early gains in reading and general achievement resulted in greater success in later years as manifested in higher adult literacy, economic attainment, and emotional adjustment. Children attending High/Scope early elementary programs scored higher on standardized achievement tests than peers in non-High/Scope classrooms. This series of scientifically rigorous studies demonstrates the effectiveness of the High/Scope approach in promoting reading and writing in young children from diverse backgrounds in multiple sites around the United States and in other countries.

For more information about the High/Scope educational approach to reading and writing, visit the Foundation's Web site at www.highscope.org or send an e-mail to reading@highscope.org.

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Good Beginnings in Reading for Infants and Toddlers in High/Scope Programs

Parents, educators, and policymakers all agree that reading and writing skills, which begin in infancy, are keys to school, job, and social success. Once mastered, they also are a lifelong source of pleasure, enjoyment, and learning. This position paper outlines how High/Scope infant-toddler programs support children's oral language development, listening, and book and print awareness. To complete this picture of reading and writing development, two other position papers are part of this series: one on reading and writing in High/Scope preschools, and the other on reading and writing in High/Scope early elementary programs.

The importance of beginning reading and writing in High/Scope infant-toddler programs

Infants are social beings from birth, connecting with other human beings to create a context of meaning and belonging. They communicate their feelings, discoveries, and desires through an increasingly complex system of cries, motions, gestures, sounds, and words. Acutely attuned to the touch and voices of parents and caregivers, infants listen and respond to adults who talk directly to them.

In High/Scope infant-toddler programs, the daily support of attentive caregivers draws children into a social community and encourages them to participate as developing speakers and listeners. The spacious, well-stocked High/Scope environment provides infants and toddlers with a lot to "talk" about as they actively explore materials that appeal to all their senses and as they participate in their caregiving routines such as bathing, diapering, and meals. In the course of their explorations and interactions, infants and toddlers develop an understanding of how verbal communication works and this understanding is the foundation for the future development of reading and writing skills. They learn that communication is a give-and-take process involving actions, sounds, and words. They learn to make and recognize the sounds of speech; to name things, people, and actions; and to express ideas. They also learn that books contain pictures of familiar things; that they can make their own picture-like marks; that stories, rhymes, and songs are fun to repeat again and again; that they can talk about their own experiences and make up their own stories; and that trusted people affirm what they do, communicate, and say. Together, these ideas about language form a foundation for children's effectiveness as speakers and listeners, and later, as readers and writers. If children do not build these critical foundations in the first three years of life, they will very likely struggle with word recognition and reading comprehension in later years.

In High/Scope infant-toddler programs, caregivers use a set of **key experiences in child development**—*statements that describe children's early communication and language learning*—to guide them in supporting children's literacy learning throughout each day (see chart, next page). As equal partners with caregivers, parents learn to recognize and support the key experiences at home.

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How infants and toddlers in High/Scope programs learn to communicate, speak, and handle books

Infants and toddlers form trusting relationships with parents and caregivers, relationships that fuel the desire to communicate, use language, and explore books. While they are powerfully self-motivated to learn with their whole bodies and all their senses and to communicate what they know, it is the affirmation and warmth of trusting relationships that enable them to do so. The formation of strong bonds with parents and High/Scope caregivers empowers infants and toddlers to *communicate* their needs and interests and elicit actions in others that bring comfort, warmth, nourishment, and satisfaction. Within the context of these relationships, they learn that communication causes things to happen; it gets results, so mastering speaking and listening, and later, reading and writing, is worth the effort.

Infants and toddlers engage in two-way communication with parents and caregivers and through these exchanges hear and master the sounds and conventions of speech. As caregivers respond to babies, babies communicate—for the pleasure of engaging in and prolonging face-to-face exchanges. They gaze and smile at their parents and caregivers and coo at favorite people, pets, and playthings. They cry, frown, and make faces to convey displeasure. They move their hands, arms, and legs in excitement, happiness, or contentment. They begin to babble and repeat the vowel and consonant sounds they hear in conversation. With time and repetition, their babbling takes on the inflections and cadences of human speech as they join in the give-and-take of social conversation with parents, other family members, and caregivers. When infants or toddlers do begin to talk, early language is streamlined and economical. They hear and understand language long before they can produce it themselves in its standard, grammatical form. In the meantime, they string together sounds, gestures, and words to convey meaning. By communicating to responsive adults what they feel and discover, infants and toddlers enter into the sustaining social life of the community where they connect with other people, test their ideas, and gain feedback about their actions, feelings, and perceptions. Children's facility with speaking, listening, reading, and writing has its roots in these very early partnerships with supportive parents and caregivers who take time to talk and listen to infants and toddlers with care throughout the day, every day.

High/Scope Infant-Toddler Key Experiences in Communication and Language

- Listening and responding
- Communicating nonverbally
- Participating in two-way communication
- Communicating verbally (learning to talk)
- Exploring picture books and magazines
- Enjoying stories, rhymes, and songs

Infants and toddlers explore and play to figure out how things work. They make discoveries about themselves and their immediate environment by coordinating taste, touch, smell, sight, sound, feelings, and action. Their young brains are wired for action, and before they can talk, it is through action that they express what they discover and feel to attentive parents and caregivers. In High/Scope settings, their experiences with interesting and challenging materials provide them with a knowledge base for interpreting the world and making sense of the things they will later talk about, draw, use in play and problem solving, and read about. Basic sensory-motor "book learning" takes place in High/Scope settings because books are accessible to infants and toddlers throughout the day. As they touch, grasp, mouth, look at, manipulate, and carry books about, infants and toddlers learn the basics:

how to hold books, open them up, turn the pages, look at the pictures, and distinguish print from pictures.

Infants and toddlers enjoy stories, books, rhymes, and songs in a leisurely, intimate setting. These experiences familiarize them with the conventions of reading and talking about stories. Sitting on a caregiver's lap with a picture book, pointing to and "talking" about the pictures, hearing and "reading" stories, hearing and trying out rhymes and songs, and talking about related experiences are all immediately pleasurable experiences that have a lasting impact on children. When infants and toddlers have these early on-the-lap book experiences with parents and caregivers on a regular basis, they learn to read in the elementary school years with greater ease than children who have not had these experiences. Day after day, snuggled in the arms of a trusted caregiver, infants and toddlers hear and try out the sounds of written language, build a concept of story, and form the notion that sounds, words, and pictures connect in the personally meaningful and satisfying process of storybook reading and storytelling.

Good literacy beginnings—including trusting relationships, two-way communication, exploration and play to figure out how things work, and the enjoyment of stories, books, rhymes, and songs—help to ensure children's later success as readers and writers.

How adults promote communication, language, and "book learning" in High/Scope infant-toddler programs

Guided by the key experiences in communication and language, High/Scope caregivers use the following strategies to ensure that infants and toddlers have the requisite skills for learning to read and write in the elementary years.

1. Create a climate of trust. Throughout the day, in every interaction, High/Scope caregivers touch, hold, speak to, and play with infants and toddlers in a warm, unhurried manner. They take pleasure in their interactions with infants and toddlers and respond positively to their needs, initiatives, attention-getting signals, utterances, questions, and comments. Alert to children's pace, ideas, nonverbal expressions, and talk, adults give infants and toddlers time to interact, respond, and speak in their own way, and they support children's relationships with peers and other adults.

2. Communicate with infants and toddlers in a give-and-take manner. Infants and toddlers make repeated attempts to communicate, connect, and convey meaning. The more they are respectfully supported in these attempts, the better communicators they become. Therefore, High/Scope caregivers pay particular attention to children's actions, sounds, expressions, gestures, and words. They watch and listen carefully to children and give them sufficient time to express themselves in their own particular fashion. They enable infants and toddlers—those who gesture, coo, babble, or talk—both to hear language and participate as active partners in communication.

3. Name and describe people, things, and actions. As they converse with infants and toddlers throughout the day, High/Scope caregivers name people and objects ("Libby, it's time to change your diaper"). They describe children's actions ("Aaron, you're holding on to the wooden table and standing up all by yourself!" "Ameerah, you're watching the squirrel with the bushy tail eat a walnut") as well as objects, pictures, and photographs children are looking at ("There's the poky puppy sitting in the shiny red wagon!"). When infants and toddlers communicate nonverbally or in "baby talk," adults respond to these messages in conventional language (Baby says, "Ba, Ba," and Mom or caregiver replies, "You want your bottle." Baby cries as caregiver changes diaper and she says, "You're really upset! You'd rather be playing!"). These practices attach words to people, objects, and actions and provide children with a broad

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vocabulary to try out as they begin to speak and, later, to read.

4. Answer children's questions. As infants and toddlers gain facility with language, they take particular pleasure in asking questions like "What dat?" and "Why?" over and over again. Caregivers in High/Scope programs answer children's questions patiently and with good humor because they value and support the curiosity and initiative that give rise to these questions. They also know that their answers provide children with information, a rationale for certain actions, a belief in the propriety of asking questions, and an opportunity to hear and savor new and familiar words.

5. Create a personal symbol for each child. A personal symbol is an easy-to-replicate line drawing of an everyday object—a house, ball, heart, tree. High/Scope caregivers label children's belongings and creations with their personal symbol and name, a practice that allows even very young children to "read" their symbol to identify their own crib, cot, cubby, or creation. As they encounter their personal symbols day after day, they also have the opportunity to see their written names and associate them with a particular set of letters.

6. Organize the play space for exploration and mobility. High/Scope caregivers support infants' and toddlers' sensory, whole-body approach to learning about how things work by arranging the care and play space to include soft places, infant- and toddler-size equipment and furnishings, and an open floor plan with plenty of space to move. They also make interesting and challenging materials accessible to children on a daily basis. Caregivers provide these spaces and materials for infants and toddlers because they understand that it is in the course of everyday play that the desire arises for communication and language. Further, using basic art materials—clay, paints, paper, crayons, markers—helps children develop the fine-motor skills that lead to making marks, scribbling, forming shapes, and later, writing alphabet letters.

7. Stock the play space with books. In High/Scope settings, small, sturdy, easy-to-handle cloth and board picture books are accessible to infants throughout the day on low shelves and in tubs or baskets caregivers place within their reach. Toddlers have a cozy book area furnished with comfortable reading spots and a good supply of sturdy board books, picture books, magazines, catalogs, postcards, and small photo albums they can easily reach, enjoy, and return to again and again on their own and with others.

8. Provide daily on-the-lap reading time. During the course of the day, High/Scope caregivers spend time with each child looking at and/or reading a book together. Caregivers hold infants in their arms and hold the book so the child can see the pictures. A mobile child may crawl into, plop into, or be invited to sit on a caregiver's lap for a leisurely book-centered interchange. Following the child's pace and cues, the caregiver and child look at pictures, name the objects they see, read the story, say the rhyme, and talk about related topics as they arise. Together they return to favorite books and explore new books to build children's storybook repertoire.

9. Rock infants and toddlers and sing to them. High/Scope caregivers rock infants and toddlers and sing to them when children need comforting, at nap time, and as part of group activities. This allows children to hear the sounds and flow of language within the context of the steady beat of music and, through imitation, to try out the sounds, words, and songs themselves. With time and repetition, toddlers build a repertoire of songs and rhymes they enjoy singing and saying on their own.

10. Team with parents to support infants' and toddlers' communication, language, and book reading. In High/Scope settings, caregivers work as partners with parents to engage infants and toddlers with books and language both at home and at the center. They talk with parents about their children's communication, language, and book experiences at

arrival and departure times. They continue the dialogue as they record child observations to share with parents in parent reports, newsletters, parent meetings, and home visits. They organize parent meetings to exchange information on child development and offer caregiving strategies that promote literacy. In these venues, guided by the strategies listed above, caregivers, parents, and entire families work together to create a home-center environment rich in child-centered opportunities for speaking, listening, book handling, story reading, and storytelling.

Scientific evidence that High/Scope infant-toddler strategies promote communication, language, and "book learning"

Research shows that the adult support strategies used by caregivers in the High/Scope approach promote infants' and toddlers' communication and language skills. The High/Scope Ypsilanti-Carnegie Infant Education Project trained professional staff to work as home visitors with mothers and their infants aged 3 to 11 months. Staff visited once a week for 16 weeks to play infant-centered games and to discuss child development with a focus on what the infant was doing and communicating during and between visits. Research findings from this project revealed that as a result of this parenting education, mothers who participated in the home visits showed more positive and facilitative language interaction with their infants than did mothers in the project's randomly assigned contrast and control groups; the mothers' increased verbal interaction in turn facilitated their children's language and cognitive development (Lambie, Bond, & Weikart, 1974). A longitudinal follow-up study found that the verbal behavior of both mothers and infants was a good predictor of children's academic performance five years later on standardized aptitude and achievement tests (Epstein & Weikart, 1979).

Other research studies have found that language develops when adults include infants and toddlers in conversation and treat them as conversational partners (Wells, 1986; Huttenlocher et al., 1991; Hart & Risley, 1995). The High/Scope infant-toddler practice of daily lap time with a book is well-supported by research. A study by Dorothy Alison and J. Allen Watson (1994) found that the earlier parents began reading aloud to their infants and toddlers, the higher the children's emergent reading levels were at the end of kindergarten. Further, in a study of reading in 15 countries, psychologist Robert Thorndike (1973) found that children who had been read aloud to from an early age became the best readers. And in a longitudinal study of literacy achievement, linguist Gordon Wells (1986) found that the best readers had heard approximately 6,000 stories between birth and age 5.

Frequently asked questions: What is High/Scope's position on . . .

Baby talk by caregivers? In High/Scope settings caregivers speak clearly and distinctly to infants and toddlers so they can hear language, try it out, and learn to utter the sounds that lead to recognizable speech. While children will create their own particular speech-like utterances, caregivers continue to talk in their natural voices and to accept, interpret, and respond to children's private speech as well as they are able, based on context and their personal knowledge of the child. At the same time, they will often imitate and prolong or emphasize the vowel sounds ("ooo," "eee," "aaaah") and the beginning consonant sounds ("baa baa," "daa daa") the infant is trying out and mastering.

Children's early speech? Children who are learning to talk pick out the most salient sounds from a stream of adult speech. They often hear and render parts of words (saying "tater" for "tractor"), pronouncing the most prominent /t/ sounds marking each syllable and leaving out the /c/ sound and the /tr/

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blend. They are apt to confuse close sounds with similar lip and tongue articulations like /w/ and /l/ (saying "wuv" for "love"). When infants and toddlers leave out or confuse these letter sounds and blends, caregivers focus on and respond to the meaning children are trying to convey without attempting to correct them. At the same time, caregivers pronounce words clearly themselves so children can hear these difficult sounds, which they will master with practice in the course of everyday give-and-take conversation.

Alphabet blocks and the alphabet song? Toddlers take great pleasure in learning and singing a repertoire of children's songs, such as "Row, Row, Row Your Boat," "Hickory, Dickory Dock," and the alphabet song. They also enjoy exploring and playing with a wide variety of blocks, including plain blocks, blocks with pictures on them, and blocks with letters on them. Some toddlers who see their cubbies and belongings labeled with their personal symbol and their name may learn the names of "their" letters and see that together those letters make up their name. In these very natural ways, letters become a familiar part of a toddler's world.

Language tapes for babies? While playing a second-language tape to an infant or toddler will probably do no harm, there is no guarantee that it will teach a child a second language. Language learning is an interactive communication process that takes place within the context of a meaningful personal relationship. The best way for a child to learn a second language is through everyday conversation with a fluent speaker. Having a Spanish-speaking caregiver, for example, would greatly enhance a child's learning of Spanish.

Computer software, TV programs, and videotapes for infants and toddlers? High/Scope does not recommend that children use computers or watch TV or videotapes in infant-toddler group care settings for two reasons: these devices have limited sensory-motor appeal, and they require constant adult mediation to be interactive. In contrast, toys, books, household items, natural objects, art materials, climbers, wagons, and other materials typically found in High/Scope infant-toddler settings invite children's sensory-motor exploration. Play and conversation with others naturally arise when these kinds of materials are available, and these experiences strengthen children's developing communication skills. However, the use of these technologies at home is another story. There, infants and toddlers generally sit on a parent's lap, and although they do not explore with their whole bodies and all their senses, they do enjoy, for example, talking about what they are doing with the mouse or seeing and hearing on the screen. We do endorse these pleasurable family-child interactions.

Background music? Infants and toddlers, like adults, enjoy listening to, moving to, and making music. In High/Scope programs, caregivers sing to and with children throughout the day, play instruments with children, move to music with children during group times, and often play a variety of soothing musical selections to children as they lie down for naps. They do not use music as background sound, however, because then both children and adults must "talk over" the music to make themselves heard. This practice, in turn, raises the overall noise level and obscures the sounds of language that infants and toddlers are striving to hear and master.

Conclusions

The High/Scope approach to language and literacy learning in infant-toddler settings lays the groundwork for later reading and writing enjoyment and success. Through their two-way interactions with each trusted caregiver, infants and toddlers in High/Scope settings learn to speak, use a rich vocabulary, and gain confidence in themselves as communicators. Their ongoing exploration of books and other materials gives them an active understanding of what words mean. The ability to produce and comprehend oral language, handle and look at

books, and hear and tell stories are skills essential to later reading and writing. By enabling children to gain and practice these skills, High/Scope infant-toddler programs put children on the path to literacy.

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How Preschoolers Learn to Read in High/Scope Programs

Reading and its companion skill, writing—the twin components of literacy—are essential parts of our lives because they are the gateway to learning and productivity in today's information age. Reading and writing open the door to academic advancement and job success and, as a primary vehicle for cultural literacy, shape our leisure time as well. High/Scope embraces the lifelong value of reading and writing for learning, exploration, personal expression, and pleasure. Longitudinal research shows that when children learn to read and write in an educational environment that builds on their personal interests and motivations, they can succeed in school, lead rewarding lives, and become contributing members of society.

This position paper sets forth for educators, families, and policymakers the foundations of literacy development that exist in the High/Scope approach to educating young children. In High/Scope preschool programs, teachers provide a broad range of active learning experiences by organizing the preschool or child care environment and planning activities around children's interests and abilities. High/Scope recognizes that children develop at different rates and learn in different ways. For this reason, teachers in High/Scope preschools use a variety of educational strategies so children at all developmental levels and with a variety of learning styles can establish a solid literacy base. Recognizing that learning to read and write is a process beginning in infancy and continuing into the elementary school years, High/Scope also has prepared position papers on how our educational approach supports the development of these skills in the years immediately before and after children's preschool experiences.

The importance of reading and writing in High/Scope preschools

Reading and writing are very important in High/Scope preschool programs. Children who attend High/Scope preschools go on to become skilled and avid readers and writers. High/Scope views what preschoolers do as "beginning" reading and writing because the competencies and attitudes they develop in the early years set the stage for subsequent learning in the elementary years and beyond. In High/Scope programs, children learn to read and write by building on the complementary skills of speaking and listening. These interrelated skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing are captured in the **High/Scope language and literacy key experiences**—*statements that describe what young children do, how they perceive the world, and the kinds of experiences important for their development (see list, next page). Teachers use the key experiences to set up the classroom environment, plan related activities, and support children's learning with a variety of prereading and prewriting instructional methods.*

Literacy development is social as well as cognitive. We write because we have something to say to others; we read to discover what others have to say to us. Learning to read and write should build on children's desire for interpersonal relationships as well as on their intellectual drive to communicate. High/Scope therefore embeds early reading and writing in children's desire to share with others what is meaningful to them. Preschoolers not only learn about the tools of communicating in print (such as letters, sounds, and phonemes) but also become enthusiastic about reading for information and pleasure and writing as a tool

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High/Scope Preschool Key Experiences in Language and Literacy

Reading and Writing

- Reading in various ways: reading storybooks, signs and symbols, one's own writing
- Writing in various ways: drawing, scribbling, letter-like forms, invented spelling, conventional forms
- Dictating stories

Speaking and Listening

- Talking with others about personally meaningful experiences
- Describing objects, events, and relations
- Having fun with language: listening to stories and poems, making up stories and rhymes

for communication and expression. In short, they develop a love of literacy that lasts a lifetime.

How children in High/Scope preschools learn to read and write

Children learn best by pursuing their own interests and following their natural curiosity about the world. We call this type of education "child-initiated" learning. For this reason, High/Scope preschool classrooms are "active learning" environments where children choose their own avenues of learning and consequently are motivated to master the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their goals (Hohmann & Weikart, 1995). While teachers and parents participate as partners in supporting and extending these learning experiences, it is the child who sets them in motion.

Every day in High/Scope preschools, children follow the High/Scope "plan-do-review" process by making plans based on their own interests at "planning time," following through on their intentions at "work time," and reflecting on their experiences with peers and adults at "recall time." In this process, children actively communicate with others, causing their language abilities to grow. As young children begin to document their plans and activities—first with drawings and symbols, later with letters and words—their literacy skills flourish. At other times of the day, including small- and large-group times, outdoor activities, and transitions, adults introduce materials and ideas to support children's emerging interests and skills in early reading and writing activities.

Scientific evidence that High/Scope preschools promote reading and writing

Research shows that the High/Scope approach promotes the acquisition of these key academic skills. The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study, a 40-year study of economically disadvantaged children, found significant differences that favored a preschool group over a no-preschool group, based on various tests of intellectual and language performance administered from the end of the first year of preschool through age 7; reading, language, math, and total school achievement at age 14; reading and general adult literacy at age 19; and better attitudes toward school throughout their education (Schweinhart, Barnes, & Weikart, 1993). The results of the High/Scope Preschool Curriculum Comparison Study support the conclusion that programs encouraging child-initiated learning, in contrast to those in which teacher-directed instruction predominates, are superior in terms of childhood emotional development and adult

citizenship (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997). The national High/Scope Training of Trainers Evaluation found language and literacy differences favoring children attending High/Scope preschools versus non-High/Scope preschools (Epstein, 1993). The findings applied to children in multiple sites across the full spectrum of socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Outside observers rated children in High/Scope programs higher than their peers on measures of language, initiative, social relations, and overall development. The more children planned and reviewed their activities, the higher their scores on these measures of achievement, attitude, and communication. Research done in other countries by independent investigators also confirms that preschool children attending well-implemented High/Scope programs outperformed those in settings without these active learning opportunities (Sylva, 1992; Veen, Roeleveld, & Leseman, 2000).

How adults promote reading and writing in High/Scope preschools

Guided by the key experiences in language and literacy, High/Scope teachers use the following prereading and prewriting strategies to ensure that children develop positive attitudes and learn essential skills:

1. Set up a book area. Every High/Scope preschool has a book area filled with attractive and interesting books and other reading materials that reflect the real people and events in children's lives as well as the worlds of imagination and fantasy. There are books of all types, including well-illustrated picture books, folklore, poetry, concept books, alphabet books, homemade and child-made books, and photo albums. The book area is warm and inviting with comfortable places where children and adults can sit together and read. The book area is open all day and arranged so children can obtain books on their own. With repeated exposure to books, children develop important concepts about their properties, including their orientation, front and back covers, and the arrangement of print from top to bottom and left to right. On a more cognitive level, children learn that books have notable characters who do interesting things and who face and resolve problems—this inspires them to create stories that reflect their own experiences and imaginations. Thus, the content of the books and other materials in the reading area is selected to represent and extend the realities and possibilities in the children's lives.

2. Read with children throughout the day. Teachers and children in High/Scope programs read together every day, throughout the day, in different settings, and using many different materials. High/Scope recommends that adults read with children in pairs or small groups, because young children cannot see the words or engage in meaningful conversation when reading is done in large groups. Reading in intimate groupings makes it a warm and personal experience that children learn to associate with positive relationships. Reading this way also offers more opportunities to develop the skills of literacy. Children begin each day by choosing a book to read with a parent or teacher at greeting time. They read the symbols and words on the message board. At planning time, they signify with what and whom they want to play through gestures, objects, and words. Books are available all during work time for the pleasure of reading with others or looking for information. Adults label artwork with children's names, often adding a title or description of the work. Eventually, children begin to label their own work. At recall time, children may use pictures, letters, or words to show what they did during work time. When walking outside, teachers and children point out familiar letters and words on signs, storefronts, and vehicles. In all these ways, reading becomes a routine part of the preschooler's day.

3. Use symbols and associate them with letters and words. At program entry, each child chooses a personal "symbol" (a sim-

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plified drawing such as a diamond or a house) that is written on their cubbies (personal storage bins or shelves), plans, things they make, and so on. The letters of their name also appear next to their symbol. Children quickly learn to "read" and "write" their symbol and to recognize those of their classmates. Symbols, drawings, photographs, and words also identify the areas of the room and mark the shelves and bins where children retrieve and return play materials on their own. The daily routine is also posted, pairing graphics and word labels. From these associations, young children learn that "letters" and "words" are symbols that stand for real objects and actions. They want to learn these symbols so they can find what they need, identify what is theirs, know what their friends are doing, and predict what will happen during the school day.

4. Fill the classroom with other writing. Letters and words are found throughout High/Scope classrooms. These may include cardboard or plastic letters for children to trace, copy, compare, and sort. Play areas are stocked with real objects that display pictures, words, and numbers. For example, there are measuring cups in the water area, maps in the block area, recipe files and food labels in the house area, tool catalogs in the construction area, and seed packets in the outdoor area.

5. Provide writing materials. Children use writing tools because the tools help them carry out their play ideas. Writing materials are in virtually every area of a High/Scope preschool. The art area has unlined paper, paint and brushes, markers, and regular and colored pencils. Chalk may be used indoors or outside. In the house area children will find such items as ruled notepads, checkbook registers, pens, envelopes and stamps, inkpads, and order forms. Computers have age-appropriate drawing and writing programs so children can create and read their own stories.

6. Encourage children to write in their own ways. Children who are asked to first master letter formation, spelling, punctuation, and grammar before communicating in writing may come to view writing as tedious. When encouraged to write without having to conform to conventional standards, however, preschool children become enthusiastic writers who can create books, cards, and messages. In High/Scope preschools, teachers encourage children to continue writing by accepting their early writing attempts (such as scribbled letters or invented spellings). Because they are also constantly exposed to conventional forms, children become eager to master and reproduce standard writing, often writing their own names and familiar words from classroom area labels such as "art," "book," "block," or "house."

7. Take dictation. Adults write down children's words for them at their request during play or other activities. For example, a child may ask an adult to write a message on a greeting card the child has made or to write down rules for a game a group of children have made up. Taking children's dictation helps them connect spoken and written language. For that reason, High/Scope teachers always write down and read back exactly what a child says. They may also take group dictation if children want to record a shared experience or make up a story together. Children often ask adults to write down their plans or descriptions at recall time. To help them add detail and complexity, adults may ask open-ended questions such as "What will you use to make that?" or "Can you tell me how you did that?" Bombarding children with too many questions, however, is likely to discourage them from talking fully and freely.

8. Explore sounds. Children in High/Scope preschools learn phonemes—the individual and separable sound units in words—by having fun with language, and they associate the sounds of oral language with the letters (phonics). Rather than "teaching" young children to associate sounds and letters through rote memorization, in High/Scope programs adults build phonemic awareness through everyday play and games as children sing songs, hear and tell sto-

ries, make up nonsense words, invent and repeat rhymes, or move to rhythmic chants. By patting or rocking their bodies to the steady beat of a recited rhyme or chant, children become better able to identify syllables and their sounds. In all these ways, children construct phonemic knowledge themselves, guided by the rich opportunities adults provide for exploring the sounds of the English language.

9. Converse naturally with children. Teachers in High/Scope settings balance listening and speaking when they interact with young children. The best way to encourage children to talk is to listen patiently as they describe their experiences, feelings, and ideas. Adults encourage children's language by getting down at their eye level, making comments and observations, repeating what children say, and rephrasing children's ideas to expand their vocabularies and elaborate on their sentences.

10. Display and send home children's writing samples. Because writing is a potent form of communication, children like to share what they have written with teachers, peers, and family members. High/Scope preschool teachers post children's writings and dictations for others to see and comment on. They send home writing samples so children can read them to parents and siblings. Teachers help parents understand the value of children's beginning writing, explaining what children are learning even when they use unconventional forms. They help parents develop a positive attitude toward all their children's attempts at communication, thereby encouraging a home environment in which reading, writing, speaking, and listening continue to flourish.

11. Support literacy through the arts. The arts encourage young children to experience the written and oral traditions of their homes and communities. Art can also nurture literacy. For example, children might expand their vocabulary by describing the artwork in a picture book, develop phonological awareness by accompanying songs and chants with dance motions, and further their writing skills by labeling props during dramatic play. In these ways, children appreciate that oral and written words are a satisfying means of creative expression.

12. Encourage families to support children's beginning reading and writing. Virtually all of the literacy strategies that teachers use in the classroom can be used by families at home. High/Scope teachers conduct parent workshops to facilitate this transfer. Teachers encourage parents to read with their children every day, taking time to talk about the content and listen patiently as children "read" to them. Parents learn how they can provide reading and writing materials at home—getting a library card, choosing appropriate books, and making paper and writing tools easily available. Family members discover that everyday interactions evoke interest in reading—looking at labels in the supermarket, recognizing letters on street signs, identifying numbers and letters on license plates, drawing and writing thank-you notes, or making up the invitation list for a birthday party. Classroom practices that parents can apply directly at home include using the child's symbol to label personal possessions, taking dictation, and displaying children's drawings and early writing. By sharing child development information and these adult support strategies, High/Scope teachers help families encourage children's beginning reading and writing efforts.

Frequently asked questions: What is High/Scope's position on ...

Posting the letters of the alphabet? Posting the alphabet is one strategy for children to see and learn letters. Letters alone, however, do not provide the "meaning" that children need to learn reading and writing. Therefore, High/Scope programs embed the alphabet in children's everyday play materials and experiences. If wall space to display children's own writing at eye level is limited, teachers have many other options. They can provide plastic or cardboard letters for tracing or copying. Children can use magnetic letters to make words or narrate stories. If children are writing

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a letter or making a book, they may ask the teacher to make a letter so they can copy it.

Teaching phonics? Rich and varied language experiences—not rote memorization of letter names or sounds in isolation—provide the context in which children attach sounds to letters and word units. High/Scope teachers use strategies such as rhyming, singing, and moving to music to help young children explore sequencing, sounds, and sound patterns. As these oral processes become familiar, children begin to supply their own rhymes or match syllables to songs and chants. Through these activities, young children learn to detect the sounds that make up words, that is, they develop phonemic awareness. By attaching letters to word sounds in names, storybooks, messages, labels, and early attempts to write, children develop phonetic knowledge of letter-sound relationships.

Direct instruction? High/Scope sees teaching and learning as a balance between child and adult initiation, not a one-way path of communication. Practically speaking, this means teachers bring specific knowledge like the alphabetic system or phonetic patterns to children's attention as their awareness and interest develop. High/Scope teachers share this knowledge and engage children with it by carefully selecting classroom materials, planning group activities, and interacting with children in intellectually challenging ways throughout the day. However, the full richness and complex array of discrete reading and writing skills cannot be taught piecemeal to children. Most of this knowledge is learned indirectly—from conversations, reading, and other oral and written media. It is by seeking meaning from these sources that young children "construct" many reading and writing principles, including representing sounds with letters and words, using shared vocabulary, and adopting conventional forms of grammar. By learning within a meaningful and natural context, children can not only exercise these specific skills but also read for comprehension, the ultimate goal of education in this domain.

Head Start Child Outcomes Framework? Both Head Start and High/Scope include language and literacy in their list of child outcome domains. The elements and sample indicators in the Head Start framework readily correspond to the High/Scope key experiences. Both emphasize such elements as book knowledge and appreciation, print awareness, early writing, alphabet knowledge, and phonological awareness. For example, Head Start lists "knowing at least 10 letters of the alphabet" as a literacy indicator. Children in High/Scope preschools will exceed this goal by associating symbols with the letters in their names and those of their classmates, the labeled areas of the room, and posted representations of the daily routine.

Local and state literacy standards for pre-kindergarten? High/Scope has cross-referenced its key experiences with many pre-kindergarten standards for reading, writing, and overall language development. High/Scope adult support strategies are compatible with standards listing the educational experiences teachers must provide. High/Scope educational goals are consistent with specifications for what children must learn. The High/Scope approach to reading and writing is also in essential agreement with the joint position paper issued by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the International Reading Association (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 1999). This compatibility in appropriate instructional methods and developmental milestones is further reflected in High/Scope assessment tools, the Program Quality Assessment (High/Scope, 1998) and the Child Observation Record (1992).

English language acquisition? Rich and varied language experiences are essential to literacy in any language. The more such experiences children have, whether in their first or second language, the more they will be prepared to read and write. To develop and maintain a language, children must hear and use it regularly in at least two different contexts. If children encounter their first language in the

home and community, and English at school and in the media, they can develop and sustain skills in both languages. The High/Scope preschool environment supports this language diversity. Because children plan and carry out activities based on their own interests and experiences, the program supports both retention of their first language and acquisition of a second language.

Conclusions

The High/Scope educational approach to reading and writing in preschool reflects over four decades of research-based practice. The foundation for these essential skills is established in an active learning environment, mediated by supportive adults, that builds on children's natural motivation to communicate, first through language and later through print. Reading and writing open the door to other learning—factual knowledge, practical information, and tools to accomplish diverse ends. They help children develop a sense of self, community, history, and future possibility. Reading and writing are also important in their own right as vehicles for discovery, expression, problem solving, and enjoyment. High/Scope features reading and writing as key experiences for preschool children so they can exercise and enjoy these skills throughout their lifetime.

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For more information about the High/Scope educational approach to reading and writing, visit the Foundation's Web site at www.highscope.org or send an an e-mail to reading@highscope.org.

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How High/Scope Teaches Reading in Kindergarten Through Third Grade

No educational achievement is of greater concern to parents, children, and the general public than a child's learning to read and write. Literacy is the key that opens the doors to further study, academic success, choices in the job market, and the personal fulfillment that comes from reading for information and for pleasure. Some elements of literacy development require instruction in specific concepts and skills, such as phonemes, letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns, and letter formation. Other aspects of literacy development are acquired through innumerable repetitions of the literacy acts themselves—reading literature in a variety of genres and styles, reading for information and enjoyment, writing to convey information or as an act of creative expression, and carrying on a communicative dialogue with others.

The importance of reading and writing in grades K-3

The literacy strategies employed in the High/Scope K–3 approach and described in this paper are based on the most recent research findings and the practical experiences of High/Scope teachers. These strategies are part of the High/Scope teaching and learning framework—a comprehensive approach to all aspects of curriculum, instruction, assessment, classroom management, staff development, supervision, and program operation that has a substantial history of success with diverse populations of students and teachers in the U.S. and abroad.

While approaches to elementary education vary in style and emphasis, most effective models subscribe to similar principles of reading and writing instruction. Most are successful, to some degree, in helping the majority of children learn to read. Many children, however, fall through the cracks and perform below other children their age in reading and writing. These children often (though not necessarily always) come from family backgrounds that did not provide them—as infants, toddlers, or preschoolers—with the kinds of early language and literacy experiences that many of their more reading-advantaged peers benefited from (see other position papers).

These "at-risk" children usually begin elementary school without thousands of hours of storybooks read to them, without extensive experience with the printed word, without the range and depth of oral English language experience their more advantaged peers have had. If these same children have grown up in homes where English is the second language, they may have missed hearing many of the sounds of English in their early years. These at-risk children are not and will not be ready to effectively benefit from even well-developed elementary-level reading instruction until they progress through the prereading, emergent-reading, and developing-reading levels on their way toward fluency. Effective reading instruction for these children must *meet them where they are* and guide them through the early literacy levels to construct adequate foundations for subsequent learning. Engaging these children in reading experiences appropriate to their current levels of literacy is the best approach to closing the gap between their skills and those of their more reading-advantaged peers.

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For the early elementary students with the lowest performance this means *going back* to strategies outlined in the infant-toddler and preschool position papers—back to experiencing word sounds, hearing stories, exploring picture books, and developing book and print knowledge with simple texts (geared to the interests of older children). Teachers must find the reading level that works for each child and build from there. Even in second or third grade and beyond, effective reading instruction must start at the child's current reading level, building from the top of that level toward the next.

Although not seen as a compensatory model, the High/Scope approach has proven effective with "at-risk" pupil populations as well as with the general population. It is not a magic remedy that overcomes serious deficiencies in a few teacher-proof lessons; in fact, no instructional method can guarantee quick or simple success for all students. However, High/Scope is a tried, tested, and complete method that teachers and schools can use effectively to help *all* children, including those at risk, learn to enjoy, value, and benefit from schooling. The High/Scope method can and does teach students to read, write, and in general, become productive and well-adjusted citizens.

How children in High/Scope K-3 classrooms learn to read and write

High/Scope's elementary program uses a comprehensive approach to literacy development. This approach balances skill and vocabulary development with rich literacy experiences that incorporate children's interests and initiatives; it also emphasizes children's active involvement in the learning process. Teachers in High/Scope elementary classrooms teach reading by organizing and providing daily experiences in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, using the **High/Scope elementary key experiences in language and literacy** to guide them.

Speaking. Throughout the day, children use oral language to communicate plans and personal experiences to peers and adults. They also participate regularly in singing, dramatic presentations, and oral readings of poetry and prose. By second and third grade, children regularly contribute to group discussions. They are also encouraged to articulate points of view on a topic and to offer support for their views based on evidence and multi-step reasoning.

Listening. Children listen to stories, poems, and expository text read aloud to them by adults and peers. They demonstrate oral comprehension by predicting story events, asking and answering questions about texts they've listened to, retelling stories, and relating story events to their own experiences. Children listen actively to peers and adults by asking relevant questions and by making connections to their own ideas and experiences.

Phonological awareness. Children identify and create rhymes; find words (in pictures and print) with the same beginning, ending, and middle sounds; and separate and blend word sounds (syllables and phonemes). Children also engage in word play by making rhymes and playing word games (e.g., "Sounds like *pan* but begins with /f/").

Phonics. Using grade-appropriate knowledge of letter-sound relationships, children sound out regularly spelled, unfamiliar words in text and when writing. They focus first on one-syllable words, such as *cat* and *pen*, with regular one-to-one letter-sound correspondences. As children's reading skills increase, they progress systematically to more complex patterns (such as blends, vowel combinations, and silent *e*'s), to the letter patterns of multisyllable words, and to suffixes, prefixes, and root words.

Developing vocabulary. Children learn to identify and read high-frequency, non-phonetic words by sorting and matching words, reading, being read to, and through shared and guided reading with a teacher. These words include those found on, for example, Dolch lists for each grade level. In the materials-rich environ-

ment of High/Scope classrooms, children are exposed to new vocabulary through reading and listening to a variety of texts, from names and labels of classroom materials, and from the full spectrum of sensory properties and experiences these materials and their daily use afford. Experiential referents give meaning to these words as they appear in the reading, writing, and speaking that children do when they plan, carry out, and reflect on their classroom activities during the *daily plan-do-review process.*

Reading books, books, and more books along with other printed material. From a classroom or school library, children in the early elementary grades select and read 25 or more books per year at their own reading level. Children choose books on their favorite subjects and by familiar authors and are encouraged to broaden the content of their reading by choosing additional books based on their interests, those of their peers, and the recommendations of the teacher. If they haven't already done so in preschool or at home, they develop knowledge of how to handle books, turn successive pages, follow text from top to bottom and left to right on the page, and track words in print. They respond to what they have read by retelling and discussing the text with peers and adults, making predictions, representing stories in pictures, and relating stories to their own experiences.

Children engage in buddy reading, individual silent reading, and guided, small-group reading sessions with the teacher. As fluency increases, children read for information and enjoyment from books, magazines, and newspapers; follow written directions for projects and games; and use dictionaries to find word meanings. They analyze narrative texts for such elements as character, setting, problem, and resolution, and they identify similarities and differences across texts. When engaging in oral reading, they use inflection and phrasing, and they respond to punctuation.

Writing—running the reading processor in reverse. Children regularly write multiple, complete sentences to express and communicate their own experiences and creative thought. They use the phonics they are acquiring to spell out words they want to write, and they use invented spellings as needed to assure fluency and completeness of thought as they move steadily toward conventional spellings. The very act of writing makes them more conscious of letter sounds. Children learn letter formation, printing, and then cursive handwriting through teacher modeling and guidance in daily writing activities. They write stories, journals, reports, and books, and use different modes of writing, such as poetry, research reports, and essays. They also create messages, e-mail, letters, posters, lists, instructions, and other written communications in the context of diverse learning activities. Children read their own writing to peers and adults, and they are encouraged to display their writing in the classroom and to share it with parents. As fluency increases, they move through the complete process of writing—from prewriting to drafting, rewriting, editing, proofreading, and finally to publishing and reviewing selected works for the home, classroom, or school library.

Scientific evidence of High/Scope's impact on reading achievement

The High/Scope educational approach is based on scientifically conducted research studies. More than 3,000 school children in three different parts of the country were assessed over three years on such standardized tests as the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills, the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, and the California Achievement Tests (Schweinhart & Wallgren, 1993). Children in classrooms using the High/Scope approach significantly outscored comparable peers in non-High/Scope classrooms on standardized achievement tests. Based on these studies demonstrating the program's significant and positive impact on student achievement, the U.S. Department of Education's Program Effectiveness Panel (PEP) validated the High/Scope elementary curriculum in 1992; High/Scope was the first compre-

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hensive model to receive such endorsement (Schweinhart, 1991). In a later study, children who had been in High/Scope K–3 classrooms had more positive attitudes toward reading and writing in fourth grade and initiated these activities more frequently than did comparison children who did not have a High/Scope experience (Hohmann, 1996). These evaluation results demonstrate that a High/Scope education gives children specific advantages in literacy.

How teachers promote reading and overall literacy in High/Scope Classrooms

1. Conduct large-group sessions (which may be called circle time, gathering, or story time) that include activities such as studying phonemes and words, identifying and creating rhymes, reading stories aloud, singing, and engaging in dramatic play and other productions. New concepts and skills are introduced, and previously introduced skills are briefly reviewed and practiced. For example, teachers may use a large-group setting to draw children's attention to the letter patterns for sound blends from a recent story they've heard, such as /br/ and /tr/. In the same session, children might practice these letter-sound patterns by thinking of additional words with these sounds to add to a word wall.

2. Organize daily, small-group instructional workshops involving word study, writing, guided reading, and application or representation of text. Each small group involves a language arts or reading task assigned by the teacher. Small-group activities are planned around printed curriculum materials or teacher-designed activities based on language arts and reading standards. A language workshop, for example, might consist of four small-group stations: a guided reading from a trade or other graded storybook; a word- and picture-matching activity based on beginning, ending, or vowel sounds; buddy reading; and journal writing. The small groups rotate through all the stations until each group has completed all the activities planned. Alternatively, all the small groups can work on the same workshop activity at the same time, then all can change to the next planned activity, and so on.

3. Read aloud daily to children, or have a child or other adult read to the class. Teachers also provide daily times for buddy reading, in which children read to a partner, or a period of sustained silent reading when children read a book from the class or school library that is of interest to them and is at their current reading level. Teachers use this time for one-on-one guided reading and for individual assessment of reading development.

4. Use computers and computer-based learning materials, when available, to support reading and writing activities. Computer programs provide language- and reading-based activities for small-group workshops and for child-initiated activities. Programs offer multimedia games and creative activities that encourage practice with letters, letter sounds, rhymes, word recognition, and comprehension. Children also use computers in writing and publishing projects and in exchanging e-mail with teachers, friends, classes at other schools, and experts in various subjects being studied. High/Scope makes computer software recommendations to help teachers identify programs that provide user choice, link sight and sound to build phonics connections, provide supportive feedback, and monitor student progress.

5. Use periodic assessment of individual reading levels to guide the choice of reading selections and instruction for each child. Teachers keep running records of children's oral reading in graded materials; they use these records along with other reading-level measures to determine children's independent reading level and instructional needs. Using observations, anecdotal notes, and portfolios to assess children's letter-sound skills, phonemic awareness, word recognition, and comprehension skills, teachers track individual literacy progress and plan suitable instructional activities.

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6. ***Work with parents and families to develop a print-rich environment at home that will develop children's skills and instill a love of reading and writing.*** Activities may include borrowing books from community or school libraries, keeping a parent-child journal, doing family histories and interviews, and playing literacy-related games such as word scavenger hunts. Teachers also keep parents informed about children's reading and writing progress at school.

Frequently asked questions: What is High/Scope's position on ...

Using phonics? Learning letter-sound patterns and the relationships between speech sounds and written words is a fundamental part of learning to read in High/Scope classrooms. Teachers first emphasize children's awareness of the individual sounds in words through activities involving rhyming; matching words with similar beginning and ending sounds; breaking words into sound units; combining, deleting, and changing sounds to create new words; and synthesizing words from individual sounds. Along with these phonemic awareness activities, teachers give children experiences connecting speech sounds with letters and letter patterns in printed words. Children apply these phonics skills as they read and/or write stories and other kinds of texts.

Using direct instruction? High/Scope teachers present some concepts and skills directly (for example, letter sounds, vocabulary, handwriting, punctuation) by describing them and presenting examples orally and in print. High/Scope teachers also engage children with content by asking them to recall facts or skills, and by practicing it in application activities. High/Scope teachers do not rely on verbal transmission or scripted lessons to convey information that can be learned inductively, nor do they rely on repeated practice of skills in isolation when these skills can be acquired more effectively through use in practical contexts. High/Scope teachers balance their instructional initiatives with children's initiatives by providing choices, asking children to plan learning projects of their own, and encouraging children to use creative thinking and problem solving in teacher-assigned tasks and activities. Teachers plan large-group activities and small-group workshops, while children plan their own learning activities during the *plan-do-review* segment of the daily routine. Teachers maintain a consistent schedule and set high expectations for children's work and for children's care and support of one another.

Meeting local and state standards? The **High/Scope elementary key experiences in child development** provide a core of developmentally sequenced curriculum objectives and performance indicators around which the High/Scope approach is built. The key experiences have been cross-referenced with both state and national standards in the major curriculum areas, including language arts and reading. Although such matches can never be exact (the standards differ somev hat from one another), the key experiences are highly compatible with most state and local standards and indicators for language arts and reading.

Supporting English language acquisition? When English is a second language, the extent of the child's literacy development in the first language is seen as a bridge to literacy in English. When possible, teachers use pictures, gestures, peer translators, and words and phrases from children's first language to establish communication as they help children acquire sounds, words, and reading/writing fluency in English.

Conclusions

Reading is a central focus of High/Scope's comprehensive approach to K–3 classrooms and curriculum. Because of its roots in cognitive psychology, the High/Scope approach emphasizes children's active involvement in the learning process. Reading instruction integrates phonologic skills and vocabulary development with work in connected text—reading for

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meaning and writing to express it—a principle emphasized repeatedly in the report of the National Reading Panel (2000). The High/Scope elementary approach can give schools and teachers the tools to prepare children for future literacy learning and enable them to take responsibility for setting and achieving personally meaningful goals. High/Scope teaches children not only how to read and write but also how to use and enjoy these skills throughout life.

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For more information about the High/Scope educational approach to reading and writing, visit the Foundation's Web site at www.highscope.org or send an e-mail to reading@highscope.org.

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Leadership in education since 1970

High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, an independent nonprofit research, development, training, and public advocacy organization, was founded in 1970 in Ypsilanti, Michigan. The Foundation's principal goals are to promote the learning and development of children worldwide from infancy through adolescence and to support and train educators and parents as they help children learn. In High/Scope programs, students learn through active involvement with people, materials, events, and ideas.

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